

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the gentleman from Arizona (Chairman KOLBE) and his staff for their leadership and work on this bill. This has been in some respects a difficult bill, and in other respects a relatively easy bill. Within the 302(b) allocation level that had been provided to this subcommittee, this is a very good conference report. Even though we were not able to fund the courthouse construction within the constraints of this allocation, this report deserves bipartisan support.

Mr. Speaker, I was one, and I know the Chair shares my view, that believes we should be moving forward on courthouse construction. There is a backlog in the criminal justice system which certainly requires this, as does the civil side of the court dockets. Notwithstanding the fact that we have not been able to do that, the balance of the bill warrants the support of both sides of the aisle.

This conference report funds the Treasury Department at \$12.355 billion, which is \$21 million below the President's request. However, it is certainly sufficient to give to the Treasury the ability to do the job that we expect of them.

Included within this amount is \$3.3, almost \$3.4 billion for the Treasury's five important law enforcement agencies. Those agencies comprise, Mr. Speaker, 40 percent of law enforcement at the Federal level. In addition, I am happy to note that this bill fully funds the IRS at the requested level, providing for enhanced customer service and the restructuring of the IRS recently mandated by this Congress.

As my colleagues know, this is one of the major problems I raised with respect to the bill as it passed the House. I was very concerned that we were not providing the resources necessary to implement the reform program that we had adopted just a short time ago.

Happily, in conference, we have now provided the resources so that that reform can be fully implemented. I have talked personally, as I know the chairman has, to Mr. Rissotti, and he believes that, given the resources in this bill, that he will be able to meet the expectations that the Congress has to ensure that citizens are treated well and served effectively and efficiently by the Internal Revenue Service.

This bill also funds many drug activities, including \$460 million for the Office of National Drug Control Policy. This important, yes, even critical office has the lead role in coordinating all of this government's efforts in the war against drugs.

Within this \$460 million, \$192 million is for the very successful high-intensity drug trafficking program, \$185 million for the ONCDP, National Youth Antidrug Media Campaign, and \$30 million for the third year of the Drug-Free

Communities Act. I think the gentleman from Arizona (Chairman KOLBE) received a request from almost every Member of the Congress, it seemed, to fully fund this drug-free communities effort.

While we could not fully fund the General Services Administration within the 302(b) allocation, GSA is funded near the requested level, including funding for needed border stations in several States, and the first stage of the project to consolidate the Food and Drug Administration at White Oak, in Maryland.

This bill addresses the rate of increase also for Federal employees' compensation. Just a few minutes ago, maybe an hour ago or so, we passed the defense authorization bill, which authorizes a 4.8 percent level for the military. Happily, this bill, pursuant to the parity language adopted by this House on two different occasions this year, funds Federal employees at the same rate.

I thank the chairman for his leadership and assistance in accomplishing that objective. Both he, Senator CAMPBELL, and Senator STEVENS were very supportive of this objective, and I thank them for their efforts in that regard.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have extended the authority for voluntary early retirement for Federal employees in this bill, critical as we downsize in a smart way. Clearly an across-the-board RIF is very inefficient. It does not necessarily remove those employees who are no longer needed, and is, both from an efficiency standpoint and from an economic standpoint, a very poor way to manage our service.

This language, which gives permanent authority to OPM to authorize early outs, will be extraordinarily helpful, I think, in managing well the Federal Government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this conference report provides government agencies with the authority to use appropriated dollars to provide child care for low-income Federal employees. I know this has some controversy to it and I know that the chairman has indicated that he intends to have our committee very closely monitor this initiative, and I look forward to working with him on this effort.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good conference report. It deserves bipartisan support. Mr. Speaker, indeed, I would hope that every Member of the House, on both sides of the aisle, could support this report. I thank the chairman for his leadership and his work, and join him in his words of praise, again, for the competency and commitment of our staff in reaching this result.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the ranking member, for his kind comments, and I would say that it has also been a great pleasure

for me and my staff to work with him. We do not always agree on everything, and we will not, that is the nature of this body, that is the nature of the legislative process. But it also is the nature of the legislative process experience on appropriations that we work together to solve problems, and work together to make sure that we have a government that functions for the best interests of all of our citizens.

I think that this bill reflects the very best of that process, and certainly both with his staff and with the ranking minority member and the other members of the subcommittee, I think we have achieved a result that we can all be quite proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA), who has been very instrumental in working for child care provisions in legislation.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support of this conference report. I want to very much thank the gentleman from Arizona (Chairman KOLBE) for his leadership and hard work on this important bill. It has been inch by inch hard work, diligent work, every step of the way.

I also want to commend the ranking member, my colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for the work that he has done. He has done a yeoman's job, and it is a great product that has come about. I also want to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for working with me to ensure that the legislation incorporates the provisions of my bill, H.R. 206, the Federal Employee Child Care Affordability Act.

This important and yet simple legislation would allow Federal agencies to use funds from their salary and expense accounts to help low-income Federal employees pay for child care. The legislation does not require any additional appropriations. It would be up to individual agencies to determine whether or not to use funds from their salary accounts to help provide child care. Agencies, not employees, would make payments to child care providers to help lower-income Federal employees pay for their child care.

One of the greatest challenges that families face is finding safe, affordable day care. America's lack of safe, affordable day care is not a new problem, but its consequences are becoming more dire. It does require new, innovative solutions.

In 1995, 62 percent of women with children younger than 6 and 77 percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 were in the labor force. Federal employees working, for example, at the National Institutes of Health in my district face significant financial choices in paying for child care.